

## Contributed

### "THE CHRIST."

By Rev. Luther Link.

It has become something of a fad in newspaper articles and in the pulpit to use the phrase, "The Christ," instead of the simple name "Christ." Without knowing just where it took its origin, the writer has been convinced that it is the outcome of pedantry rather than of real scholarship. Attention was forcibly directed to this matter on a recent Sabbath morning, when the writer heard read from a prominent Baptist pulpit, a passage in Colossians from the Twentieth Century New Testament in which this phrase was conspicuous on account of its variation from the familiar translations. Upon the first opportunity, the Revisers text was consulted, together with that of Wescott and Hort, to ascertain the cause of the variation. With regret, we found that Wescott and Hort have given countenance to this pedantry by writing, "christos" without a capital, whenever it is preceded by the article; showing that it is in such situation regarded as equivalent to "the Messiah." Under the impression that this must be a hastily formed and unjustifiable explanation of the use of the article in certain cases, we set out to ascertain the real explanation by a direct appeal to usage. It was not long before we seemed to be rewarded for our pains by the ability to anticipate the use or omission of the article by the very form of expression as given in the Concordance.

Galatians was first taken up because of the early date of this epistle, in order to ascertain whether Paul's style had undergone any change as compared with his later epistles. We found the same phenomena confronting us in Galatians as in Colossians, which speedily excluded the supposition of change. Several cases were found in each epistle of the employment of the article, and it was noticed that in almost every case a noun with an article had preceded. Before pursuing the matter further we then turned to Winer's Grammar of the New Testament, to see whether he had not noticed so remarkable a fact. It was a gratification to find that he had noticed this fact, and had asserted the invariable use of the article, when the word is dependent upon a preceding noun. Winer quotes Gersdorf as having pointed out the difference in the use of the article in the evangelists and in the epistles; and then says: "In the epistles, however, those cases must be excepted, where a noun on which christos depends precedes . . . since with this noun the article is never wanting." He should have said, when it is preceded by a noun with the article it is never wanting. But this does not cover the whole case, and he adds: Elsewhere too Paul not infrequently employs the Article before Christos, not merely when accompanied by a preposition but even when in the Nom., as in

Rom. 15: 3, 7, etc. But it will be observed that this also does not account for these latter exceptions.

We think that an inspection of the cases will serve to convince any one that there is a reason for the use or omission in every case, and that in the case where Christos is dependent upon a noun with the article, euphony demands the repetition of the article with the noun in the Genitive. The reason is therefore strictly grammatical and rhetorical, and does not at all indicate that the word is used appellatively, rather than as a proper name. We believe it to be true that Paul uses Christos not as "more of a proper name," but that he uses it invariably as a proper name. It is a matter of congratulation, therefore, that neither form of the Revised Version has followed the fad of inserting the article, where it is really out of place in English, because misleading.

It only remains now to examine the rare cases of the use of the article with Christos, which do not come under the rule given above.

In Gal. 5: 24, the article occurs with Christos in the Genitive, when it is not dependent upon a preceding noun. But fortunately the critical text adds: "Iesu" to Christou, showing beyond a doubt that it is a proper name. Despite this fact Wescott and Hort write "Christou" with a small letter, although nothing could more signally demonstrate the absurdity of such a rule as that which they laid down for themselves. The explanation of the use of the article is not far to seek. It is manifest from the context that it is employed to give emphasis, because of the contrast, which is here introduced with the Spirit of whom the apostle had been speaking.

Two or three cases in Colossians, require notice. The first is that in Ch. 1: 7; "Who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf." Here the phrase "on our behalf" (huper hemon) is inserted between the adjective and its noun, and serves to render it definite, taking the place of an article, so that the employment of the article with Christou following, comes under the spirit of the above rule. In Ch. 3: 1, the article before Christos is evidently the article of repeated mention, referring back to verse 20 preceding, where Christos is used without the article according to the revised text. The article with the Nominative in the same sentence is obviously of the same character. The same explanation will apply in verses three and four, although euphony may have its weight in verse three, making the phrases "with Christ" and "in God" uniform.

Now while it is true that in the gospels the simple "Christ" is usually found with the article, and that the effect is to mark it as an appellation with special reference to the Messiah, it does not follow that this rule is invariable, or that the evangelists might not have employed Christos as a name, had they wished to do so, for they did use the compound name. Dr. Warfield in his book on the names of Christ, points out

that in only one passage in Mark, does Christos appear without the article. He adds: "And therefore, it has been frequently supposed to be employed there, not as an appellation, but as a proper name, and therefore, again to be out of place on Jesus' lips and to be accordingly an intrusion into the text from the latter point of view of his followers." He thinks there is no reason why Christos may not be taken as an appellation, citing Luke 23: 2, as an instance. While this may be true, it is certainly more natural to take it as a name, and why feel any necessity to make it out an appellation. Did not Christ know his own name? Since "my" is left out of the text it reads, "In the name that ye are Christ's." In accordance with the idea that Christ is to be taken as appellative, Dr. Warfield interprets this to mean, "On the ground that they are servants of the Messiah." But in the name that ye are Christ's may also be taken to mean, "Upon the credit of the name of Christ," which ye bear by reason of your profession. This will account for the use of "name" as well as Christos without the article, and it suits the context perfectly, for the following verse makes it clear that profession of Christ's name is implied. It is precisely those who "believe on him" that are "Christ's."

There is no reason to hunt for excuses for an appellative sense, as if the evangelists did not know the Saviour by the name of Christ. But there is a reason for their frequent use of the phrase, the Christ, and it must have been because the people, for whom they wrote, needed to have it hammered into them that he was the promised Messiah. Later in the history, the idea was too common to require this constant emphasis, and the accepted fact became wrapped up in the name "Christ." To use the term, "the Christ," now goes back to the days before Peter and Paul, and is the most disgusting of pedantries.

I have read somewhere the story of a poor woman who looked longingly at the flowers in the king's garden, wishing to buy some for her sick daughter. She was angrily repelled by the king's gardener, who rudely told her, "The king's flowers are not for sale!" But the king, chancing to pass, plucked a bouquet and gave it to the wistful woman saying, "The king does not sell his flowers; he gives them away." Our King does not sell eternal life; He gives it.

Dr. Judson Swift, the secretary of the American Tract Society, said on a recent warm afternoon: "Our army of colporteurs will soon be taking their vacations. They will return to work refreshed. They will labor with increased zeal. I am a believer in the vacation. And I have no patience with those who say to the vacationist as the old lady said to her pastor as he set out for a fortnight in the mountains: 'Satan never takes a vacation, Mr. Steenthly.' Well, my dear Mrs. Jones, the pastor answered, 'I never did believe in imitating Satan.'